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Decision making in the USSR

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Decisionmaking in the USSR

The supreme policymaking body for the USSR is the Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This group is chaired by Leonid Brezhnev and includes the Communist Party Secretaries for ideology, industry, and agriculture as well as top government leaders such as Kosygin and Mazurov and spokesmen for other key groups. At weekly meetings, Politburo members present policy recommendations according to their areas of responsibility. Much of the staff work on these recommendations is done by the Central Committee sections.1 The final policy decisions are reached by consensus, although the results of Politburo voting are never published.

Once policy decisions have been made by the Politburo, the Central assumes a general supervisory role while details of implementation and administration of policy are handled by the government. In the economic sphere, for example, the Politburo sets the guidelines for the annual and five-year plans. The drafting of the plan documents, however, is done by the government planning organization. After the draft plans are approved, the government assumes responsibility for implementation and passes plan targets down to industrial organizations for fulfillment.

The Soviet government is headed by a Chief of State - N.V. Podgornyy - and by a Head of Government - A.N. Kosygin. Podgornyy holds a largely ceremonial office, but Kosygin, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, holds a major office. The Council of Ministers administers the economic life of the country; it has final responsibility for determining output of all major commodities, for setting prices and wages, and for seeing that plans are fulfilled.2

Most ministry heads and their deputies are senior executives, and not policymakers. A minister's main job is to see that plans are fulfilled in his jurisdiction -- which, for example, may be the entire steel industry, all of Soviet communications, or the nation's educational system; but a few ministers, including Agriculture Minister Polyanskiy, Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defense Minister Grechko, and State Security Chairman Andropov, are also Politburo members with strong voices in policy decisions.

^{1.} For the organization of the Central Committee, see the chart. 2. For the administrative organization of the Council of Ministers, see the chart. Note: Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be directed to [of the Office of Economic Research, 25X1

All ministers can of course influence policy to the extent that they lobby successfully among policymakers. Many of the industrial ministers have been enterprise managers with engineering-technical backgrounds. Within their vast, cumbersome domains, the industrial ministers deal with production and staffing, allocate funds for investment and R&D, and decide the matters that would come before the operating head of a giant corporation.

The Central Committee section heads and their staffs exercise as much authority as the ministry heads and their deputies; however, they perform different functions and they have different career backgrounds. For example, in meetings with representatives of foreign governments, ministry heads act as official spokesmen while heads of the Central Committee sections would perform comparable tasks with party representatives of other Communist countries. Many of the section heads have technical educations but have not continued their respective specialties, choesing instead to become involved in the party apparatus. The section heads oversee the work of the ministries, and thus they are an important point in the transmission of policies set by party organizations.

Foreign Trade

Foreign trade decisionmaking in the USSR is centralized at the highest party-government levels. Broad policy decisions are made by the Politburo, and tight control over foreign trade activity is maintained by the Council of Ministers. Over the last ten years, the Council of Ministers has assumed more direct control of foreign trade and now coordinates all foreign trade activity. The deputy premiers presently closest to foreign trade matters are V.N. Novikov and V.A. Kirillin, who is also head of the State Committee for Science and Technology.

The details of administering foreign trade and fulfilling foreign trade plans are left to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, headed by N.S. Patolichev. The Ministry of Foreign Trade receives information from the government planning organization on import requirements and exportable surpluses. The Ministry supervises more than 40 foreign trade corporations through which all trade is conducted. Although Soviet industrial organizations cannot conduct foreign trade directly, there is an increasing tendency to allow representatives of industry to participate in trade discussions. This policy is expected to result in foreign trade decisions that are more rational and more responsive to industry's needs.

The State Committee for Science and Technology is the prime force in the USSR's drive to acquire foreign technology. This group monitors foreign technological developments and determines which foreign innovations should be imported. The Committee evaluates competitive

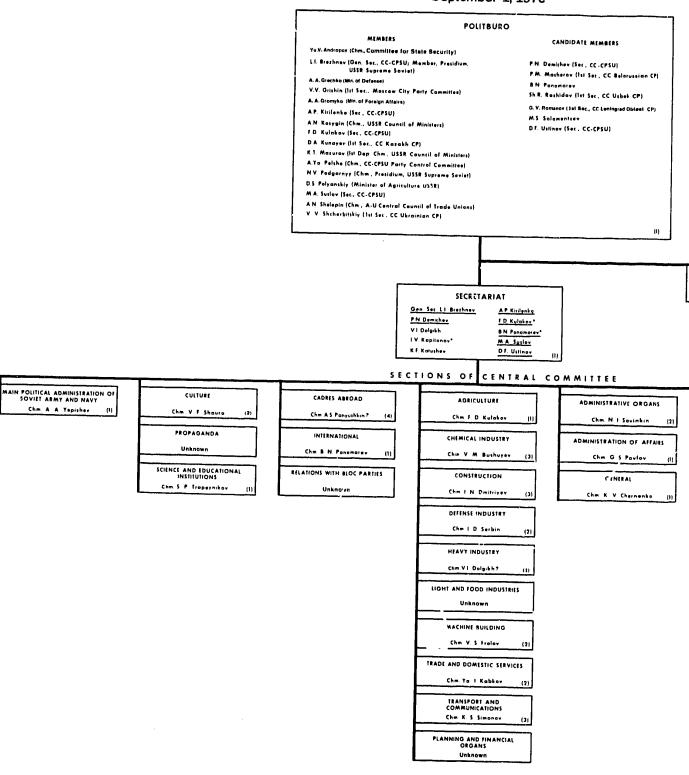
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contract proposals, sets prices on Soviet technology sold abroad, and determines foreign currency outlays. The official division of labor between the State Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Trade has never been made clear, and rivalry between these organizations has long been evident. Foreign visitors to the USSR who are involved in technology sales or technical cooperation are received by the State Committee's Deputy Chairman for foreign relations D.M. Gvishiani, who is Premier Kosygin's son-in-law.³

^{3.} For the organization of the State Committee for Science and Technology, see the chart.

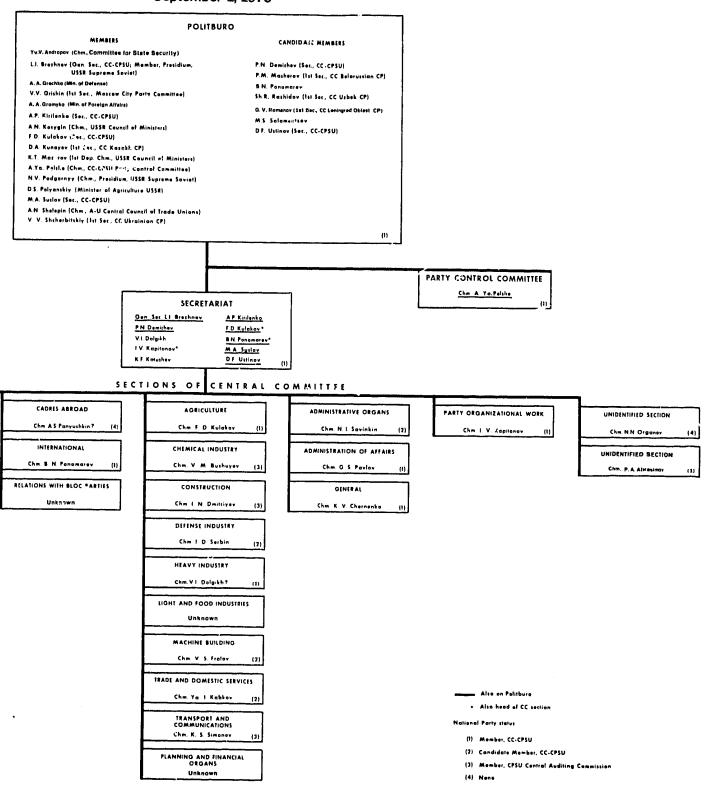
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CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPARATUS September 1, 1973

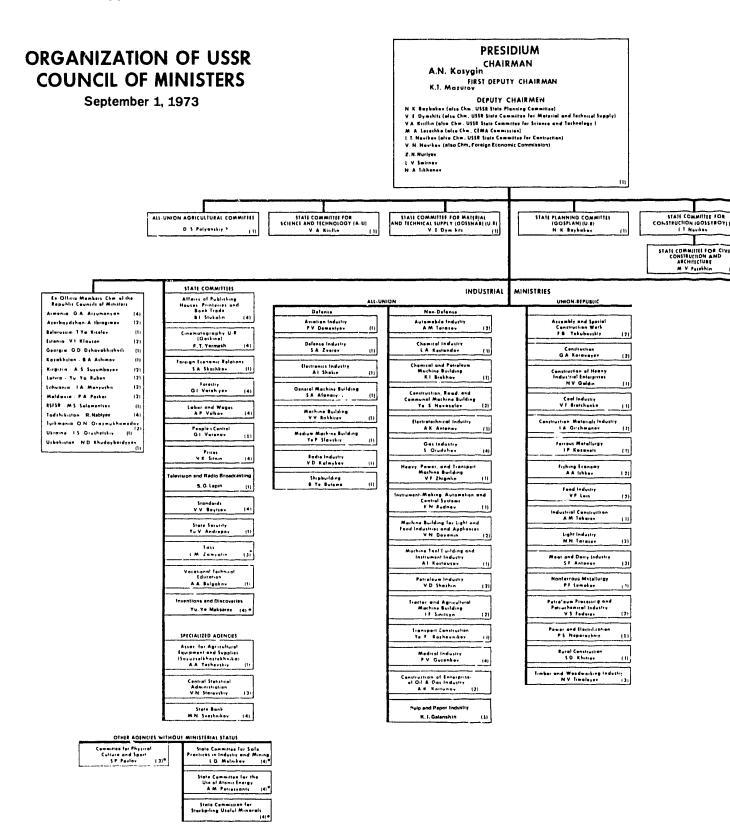


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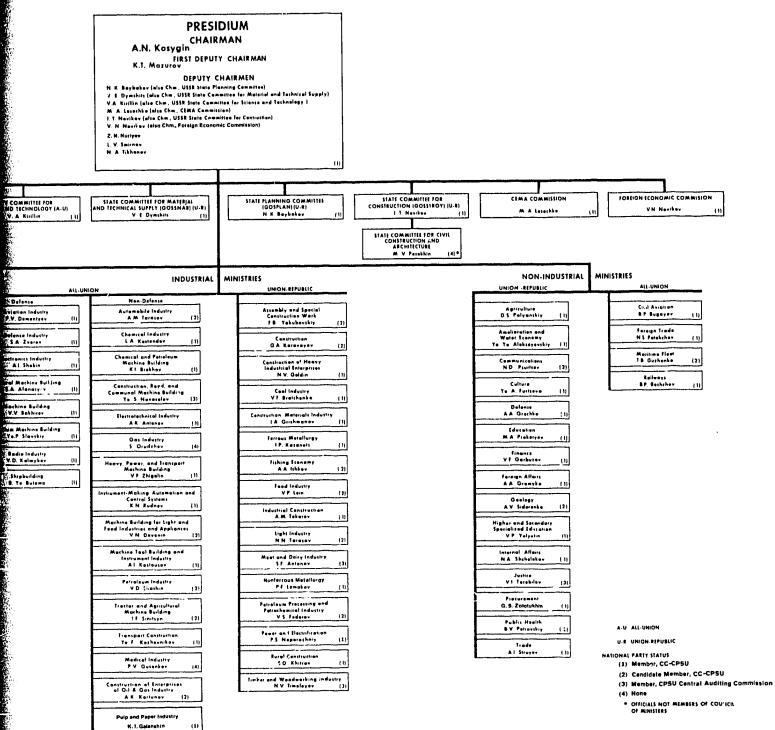
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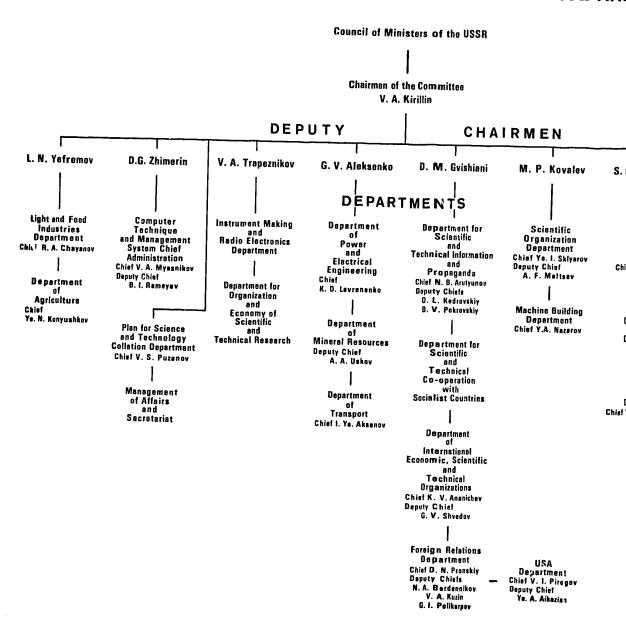
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